

about 160,000 jobs. This puts the administration on track to reach its goal of 272,900 job cuts by the year 1999. Furthermore, congressional efforts to eliminate, streamline, or reform outdated programs could accelerate or increase the numbers of Federal jobs lost. Reductions in the number of full time equivalents [FTE's] will displace a number of workers and reductions-in-force [RIF's] most likely will follow. All of the job cuts cannot be absorbed by retirements or attrition. Therefore, as the nation's largest employer, the Federal Government should be sensitive to its displaced employees and do what it can to ease their transition into the private sector—in other words, give them a soft landing.

The Federal Employee Separation Incentive and Reemployment Act will provide temporary authority for the payment of retirement and separation incentives which will assist agencies reduce their workforce through attrition rather than RIF's. Buyouts, private sector reemployment training and relocation incentives, a job bank, and extension of health care and life insurance benefits will ease the Federal employee's transition out the Federal work force. This legislation will save the Government money because buyouts are less expensive than RIF's. A reduction in the number of RIF's will protect dwindling morale which adversely impacts on productivity. Finally and most importantly, this legislation will help the separated Federal employee make a smooth transition into the private sector.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is a combination of some new and old ideas. This legislation should serve as a starting point for more good ideas which I encourage Federal employee unions, groups, and associations to share with the Civil Service Subcommittee. Also, I call on the administration to put forth some suggestions about how to ease Federal employees' transition into the private sector. For instance, perhaps OPM should conduct job fairs around the country whereby OPM helps match experience and qualified separated Federal employees with private sector jobs.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage our colleagues to cosponsor this important legislation, and I urge the chairman of the Government Reform and Oversight Subcommittee on Civil Service to hold hearings on this important legislation. This bill is a good government measure intended to help displaced Federal employees. While we may not be able to guarantee lifetime jobs to our dedicated Federal employees, we can help give them a soft landing.

Mr. Speaker, the following is a brief description of the incentives and transition assistance included in the bill:

(1) Incentive Payments for Employees Eligible for Immediate Retirement.—This program would provide for incentive payments to employees who voluntarily separate but who are not eligible for an immediate annuity. These Voluntary Separation Incentive Programs (VSIPs) are generally referred to as buyouts. VSIPs may be paid only if they are necessary to avoid or minimize the need for involuntary separations due to a RIF, reorganization, transfer of function, or other similar action.

(2) Payments and Other Incentives for Employees Not Eligible For Immediate Retirement.—This program gives an incentive to Federal employees who are not eligible for immediate retirement to find private sector employment by providing an incentive payment to a Federal employee who obtains pri-

vate sector employment within six months after the employee's voluntary separation. The incentive payment is based on the amount of severance pay the employee would have been entitled to in the case of an involuntary separation. The sooner a former employee obtains reemployment, the greater the amount of the reemployment incentive. Specifically, the employee would receive 100 percent of his/her salary if he or she obtains private sector employment within the first two months of separation. He/she would receive 80 percent if the new employment commences within three months, 60 percent in four months, 40 percent in five months and 20 percent in six months.

(3) Reemployment Incentives—Priority Placement Programs for Federal Employees Affected by a Reduction-in-Force.—This program codifies a Presidential order establishing a government wide priority placement program. This program is modeled after the successful Department of Defense priority placement program. In essence, the program would provide a system under which agencies will be required to fill positions with displaced employees referred through the program if the employee is qualified for the position. Agencies would obtain employee names from a central inventory of employees who have been RIFed or given notice that they will be RIFed.

(4) Non-Federal Employment Incentives—Retraining Incentives.—Under this program, agencies may pay a retraining incentive to non-Federal employers upon the employee's completion of 12 months of continuous employment by the non-Federal employer. This gives private sector employers an incentive to hire displaced federal employees by paying for a portion of the employee's retraining. Retraining incentives shall not exceed \$20,000.

(5) Non-Federal Employment Incentives—Relocation Incentives.—Under this program, agencies may pay a relocation incentive to an eligible employee if it is necessary for the employee to relocate in order to commence employment with a non-Federal employer. Relocation incentives shall not exceed \$20,000.

(6) Job Placement and Counseling Services.—Under this program, agencies may establish a program to provide job placement and counseling services to current and former employees and their families. Services may include career and personal counseling, training in job search skills, and job placement assistance.

(7) Extension of Life Insurance Benefits.—A federal employee who is separated involuntarily or takes early retirement may elect to continue his/her life insurance coverage and pay both the employee's and agency contribution share. Under current law he/she can not.

(8) Extension of Health Insurance Benefits.—Current law generally requires that retiring employees must have participated in the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP) for the five years preceding retirement in order to continue their coverage as retirees. This new program directs the Office of Personnel Management to waive the five-year requirement for a federal employee who retires before October 1, 1999, and is eligible for an immediate annuity, provided the individual is enrolled in the FEHBP on the date of retirement.

TRIBUTE TO EL RANCHO HIGH SCHOOL ACADEMIC DECATHLON TEAM

## HON. ESTEBAN EDWARD TORRES

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 7, 1995

Mr. TORRES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the students, coaches, and parents who make up the El Rancho High School Academic Decathlon Team.

On November 18, 1995, El Rancho High School competed in and hosted the 1995 Los Angeles County Academic Decathlon. More than 60 schools from Los Angeles County participated. For the third year in a row, the El Rancho High School Academic Decathlon Team won the Southeast Divisional Region and placed 11th in the entire county.

Sergio Aguilar, Charles Cazares, David Enevoldsen, Leslie Gonzales, Giraldo Goyenaga, Scott Moore, Jozelyn Pablo, Sherry Panganiban, and David Zaragoza are the nine students who make up this year's winning team. With the guidance and support of their families and coaches Doug Anderson—head coach—Jim Dyson—assistant coach—Gary Barton, Della Bruhn, Julie Ellis, Karen Mainer, Tim McMullen, Ben Meza, Cheryl Milas, Ben Rich, Eva Rosa, Chris Whalen, Stan Wlasick, the decathletes proved that the El Rancho High School Academic Decathlon Team is a formidable competitor.

The team has a long and successful tradition of winning the Southeast Divisional Region, never placing lower than third and placing first in 1988, 1990, 1993, 1994, and 1995. For 3 consecutive years, El Rancho has been the Southeast Regional Champion.

The dedication and commitment demonstrated by these students is commendable and noteworthy. Studying for the competition required many early mornings and afterschool hours, and spending summers and weekends at school in preparation for the competition. These young people serve as promising role models for their peers and future academic decathletes.

Mr. Speaker, it is with pride that I rise to recognize these exceptional students, coaches, and parents. I ask my colleagues to join me in saluting these accomplished individuals and in extending our congratulations and best wishes for their continued success.

## PERSONAL EXPLANATION

## HON. BARBARA B. KENNELLY

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 7, 1995

Mrs. KENNELLY. Mr. Speaker, on November 30, I was absent from the House of Representatives on official business and missed rollcall votes 830, 831, 832, and 833.

Had I been present I would have voted "aye" on rollcall No. 830, "aye" on rollcall 831, "aye" on rollcall 832, and "nay" on rollcall 833.

I ask unanimous consent that this be reflected in the RECORD.